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ABSTRACT

The nature of children's writing and drawing forms a useful starting point for examining journal writing with young children. Much research and literature suggests the educational value of having children write, yet a controversy exists among writing authorities concerning whether children's drawings are a necessary part of journal-writing experiences. More often, however, writing educators view the processes of emergent writing and drawing as inseparable. Young children use writing and drawing to test and stabilize their feelings, to think and explore their surroundings, and to use different representational methods for different purposes. Drawing also plays an important part in facilitating language learning, comprehension, and vocabulary learning. Teaches may wish to use practical and simple drawing guides to help them teach basic drawing skills. Although it appears to be natural for drawing to disappear from journal writing, many students would benefit from continuing the drawing experience. Many children need to draw simply because they cannot comprehend language through a strict verbal-written instructional program; others benefit by using drawing for creative and extended thinking. (Three examples of children's writing/drawing are included; 43 references are attached.) (RS)

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THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DRAWINGS IN CHILDREN'S WRITING: A NATURAL DEVELOPMENT OR A NATURAL DISASTER?

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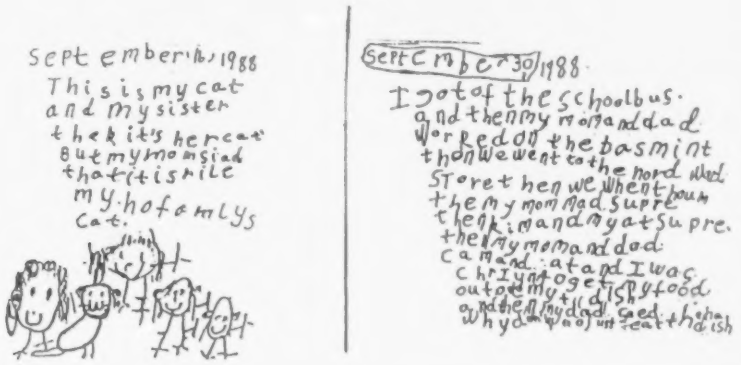
The Disappearance of Drawings in Children's Writing:

A Natural Development or a Natural Disaster?

"After the twelfth story, pictures disappeared altogether" (Buss & Busch, 1988, p.54). This message is repeated in much of the literature which discusses the developmental stages and educational value of encouraging children to write daily. What should teachers tell children such as Sherry, a seven year old, who beamed with self-confidence and satisfaction over the extended writing in her daily journal with no accompanying drawing?



Two of Sherry's Writings

Should teachers intercede and redirect children to further explain what they have written by drawing a picture? If teachers view children's writing as a social process in which children use symbols to represent their experienced world and to construct imagined ones (Dyson, 1990; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984), and if teachers see young children's writing as an interactive process evolving within and shaped by children's interactions with other symbolic media, such as drawing, (Dyson, 1989; Hubbard, 1989), then teachers might want to become concerned when drawing begins to wane in children's journals and ultimately seek ways to incorporate drawing into the writing process.

The nature of children's writing and drawing forms a useful starting point for examining journal writing with young children. In this report, we first discuss the current relationship between journal writing and representational drawing. Second, we look into language outcomes as a result of

writing/drawing experiences. Third, we offer some advice on how to facilitate drawing in conjunction with writing when drawing subsides.

Writing and Drawing

Much research and literature suggests the educational value of having children write. Daily journal writing, in particular, has been encouraged by classroom teachers and reading specialists (Hipple, 1985; Milz, 1985; Serences, 1987) as well as endorsed by a national language arts curriculum task force (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1984).

Young children's drawing is spontaneous, aesthetic, expressional, and graphic. Children freely draw what they see and feel as they explore their world. Older children still maintain an innate interest in drawing, but their drawings convey what they know and feel through subtle and figurative compositions (Gardner, 1980; Goodnow, 1977). Researchers point out that because of the subjective-aesthetic nature of drawing, children's drawings cannot be used to measure their general intellectual development (Freeman, 1980; Yule, Lockyer, & Noone, 1967). However, some insight into the mental maturation level of children between ages 5 and 10 can be seen by examining the human body parts children individually consider significant enough to choose to include in their drawings (Gonzales, 1986).

A controversy exists among writing authorities concerning whether children's drawings are a necessary part of journal-writing experiences. Some educators think it is a positive sign of children's writing growth when they stop drawing (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987; Kress, 1982). Others explain the writing process and include numerous children's drawings as evidence to support writing development, but then fail to mention drawing as an important part of the writing process (Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel, & Klausner, 1985). More often, however, writing educators view the processes of emergent writing and drawing as inseparable. It is suggested that children use drawing to communicate and also as a scaffold, rehearsal, or elaboration technique in their writing (Graves, 1983; Hubbard, 1989). Literature on the emergent reader suggests that children use words and pictures

together to communicate and learn language (Clay, 1979; Strickland & Morrow, 1989).

Writing/Drawing and Language

Drawing to Facilitate Writing

Writing appears to have several developmental stages which overlap those of drawing: both graphically symbolize an object; both create a graphic object for another; and both represent a symbolic narrative form (Dyson, 1982). According to Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982), in the early stages of reading and writing, there is a time when the processes of print and picture come together as a complementary whole. It is not uncommon for very young children to write and draw at the same time, for the same purposes. Older children tend to use drawing as a strategy for comprehending and extending their writing.

Amazingly, young children are not taught to draw, but innately and compulsively draw to explore and "play with" their expanding world (Luria, 1977-1978). Nonetheless, there is an undeniable "knowing" intentional quality present when children use the conventional picture (narrative) and diagramming (mapping) forms in their drawing (Dillon & Sternberg, 1986; Goodnow, 1977).

For example, examine eight-year-old Joe's narrative picture-drawing describing his and D.J.'s snowfight:

Joe's Narrative Picture-Drawing

Although Joe writes that the snowfight was fun, the expressions on the boys' faces as they were getting hit by snowballs gives the impression that it was really no fun. Joe's drawing demonstrates that there is information added in his drawing that was not conveyed in writing.

Then, too, notice how seven-year-old Deanna drew her picture in a diagramming (mapping) fashion as she explained the Easter egg hunt she and her brothers experienced on Easter morning:

Deanna's Labeled Drawings

Deanna's illustrations are not drawn in sequence with her writing. Logical progressions may be influenced by media, writing tools, or the confines of space on the page (Graves, 1983). Vital to understanding the role drawing plays in Deanna's journal is the fact that she adds additional information in her picture not found in her drawings. Deanna drew a picture of the parts of the refrigerator, indiscernible objects on top of the refrigerator, and room sections and positions showing where her family found the eggs. She used her drawing to retell the hunt rather than elaborate additional information. Furthermore, by looking at Deanna's drawing, an observer may well conclude that Deanna's Easter egg hunt was a happy experience--a message that was not relayed by reading her journal entry alone.

Both Joe and Deanna offer evidence that children do use writing and drawing to 1) test and stabilize their feelings, 2) think and explore their surroundings, and 3) use different representational methods for different purposes.

Drawing to Facilitate Language Learning

Drawing plays an important part in learning language. Bartelo (1983) suggests that drawing pictures from thoughts (representational drawing), whether graphic, visual, or symbolically written, is necessary in language learning because learning is a multi-faceted process through which children use their modalities to extract meaning, make sense of print, and express meaning in language. Drawing also invites oral discussions and social interactions within the classroom. Not only do some children talk while they are drawing and writing in their journals, but most children enjoy discussing the drawing that accompanies their writing (Dyson, 1987). Having a real audience provides children an opportunity to practice speaking, gives purpose to their journal writing, and sparks interest in children's motivation to write and draw.

Drawing to Facilitate Comprehension

Comprehension in writing implies understanding what has been written. Drawing pictures before, during, or after writing helps children compose and interpret meaning from print (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). Temple, Nathan, Burris, and Temple (1988) note that drawing can also serve as a type of memory bank that children can refer to as they write. In journal writing, drawing after writing directs children back into their writing to reexamine and reread its vocabulary and content. The end result can be revision, clarity, and extended thinking about writing. Adding the visual component of drawing as a part of journal writing encourages children to self-monitor their writing while they engage in more complex and aesthetic ways to learn about writing and become more expressive writers.

Drawing to Facilitate Vocabulary Learning

Children's ability to read and understand words influences their reading and writing achievement (Juel, 1988; Freebody & Anderson, 1983). It seems that good readers focus on the meaning of the word while poor readers focus on the symbol and how it sounds (Tunnel & Jacobs, 1989). Teaching vocabulary strictly through phonics, word definitions, and context may not be sufficient for these students to understand the meaning of words (Herman and Dole, 1988). Both Platt (1977) and Olson (1988) suggest that some poor readers may be handicapped because they are unable to reinforce the visual image of the word(s) they are reading. The authors suggest that one way to teach vocabulary through symbols is to teach words through drawing. This suggestion supports Dewey's (1934) proposition that in order to fully comprehend an experience (in this case, linking a word with its meaning), the experience must run its course to fulfillment. In other words, some students not only need to visualize the image of the word or words being discussed (Bell, 1986), but also draw it (Lansing, 1984).

The purpose of sketching when drawing representationally is not to draw an exact replica, but to record segments and qualities of images embedded in children's minds as they interpret the word in relation to the experiences of their world. Transferring what children think they "see" in their minds to a drawing which represents that image enables children to study, revise, and edit their drawing in a manner similar to that used in process writing. Thus, by creating ideas through drawings, children relate the words to their own life experiences and think about words in a new way.

Although more research is needed, it appears that some poor readers and slow learners rely on the use of drawing to attain basic comprehension while some good readers and able learners use drawings to extend their thinking.

Some Questions and Advice Concerning Drawing

Q: What can teachers do when some children choose to discontinue drawing in their journals?

A: It is true that some children, particularly good readers and writers, prefer to discontinue drawing as their confidence in writing grows. It makes good sense that teachers should allow those children to do so (Calkins, 1986). These children are showing signs that they are successfully comprehending through the writing process. There are other children, however, who need visual imagery while reading/writing. Olson (1988) contends that some children who are low achievers are also highly visual learners. Her study reveals that additional drawing experiences can aide highly visual learners to comprehend meaning from print.

Q: If drawing comes so naturally to children, why do some children lose interest in drawing?

A: Teachers need to understand that children's interests in drawing are not consistent and that children go through normal phases of displaying disinterest in drawing (Ives, Silverman, Kelly, & Gardner, 1979). Loss of interest in drawing may be attributed to many factors: fascination of learning a new skill; teacher indifference to children's drawings accompanying their writing; feelings of inadequacy concerning their drawing ability (teacher or child's) or, possibly, time constraints.

Q: How can teachers stimulate an interest in drawing?

A: Young children normally have no difficulty drawing, although some children might appear inhibited because they lack free drawing experiences at home. To these children, increasing opportunities to draw freely and valuing and encouraging their accomplishments can be helpful.

Often, however, as children get older and develop a keener perceptual maturity, it may be the technical difficulty of knowing how to draw that discourages children from drawing (Langford, 1989). Children's drawing skills do not mature at the same rate as their perceptual awareness of the world (Piaget & Inhelder, 1948). Children around 8 or 9 years old easily become frustrated because they often cannot draw what they know and see as "real." Children need to be encouraged to use their imaginations, graphic motor facilities, and other special artistic endowments. Wilson, Hurwitz, and

Wilson (1987) note that without an art teacher to provide instruction in the discipline of drawing, most students will remain inhibited by intrinsic biases and attain only a low level of drawing ability.

Because the intervention of an art teacher is not always possible, teachers may wish to use practical and simple drawing guides to help them teach basic drawing skills. Three suggestions which may be helpful for teachers to use during regular journal writing include the following: First, supply children with tracing, copying, and stencil supplies. If copying and/or tracing is employed, monitor the activity to allow students to achieve a sense of accomplishment and success in drawing, but do not encourage over-reliance on such types of drawing. It is important to encourage children's original drawings whenever possible. Second, provide models as exemplars. Classmates, toys, figurines or objects of interest like dinosaurs, cars, and farm animals can spark an interest in drawing. Third, provide a variety of well-illustrated children's literature. Wordless books, pictionary-dictionary books, Caldecott Medal award-winning books, natural science books, and sports books contain delightful pictures that may stimulate children to want to draw. Reading, writing, sharing, and drawing are often generated from such an accessible library.

Conclusion

The evidence presented suggests that although it appears to be natural for drawing to disappear from journal writing, many students would benefit from continuing the drawing experience. Research is currently being done to document particular aspects of children's drawing and writing (Neu & Stewig, 1991), however, more research is needed. In retrospect, teachers might view the decline of children's drawing as a signal that the dichotomy of writing and drawing needs to be taught and reinforced in such a manner which allows children to coordinate newly-discovered verbal and visual abilities skillfully.

Many children need to draw simply because they cannot comprehend language through a strict verbal-written instructional program; others benefit by using drawing for creative and extended thinking. Encouraging drawing along with writing (especially journal writing), is a strategy which

extends the opportunity for all children to explore language meaning through their visual senses at their stage of cognitive and mental development. As eight-year-old Jesse recently said, "I can see what I'm writing now."

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